



## **Service-learning and social studies teachers' instructional strategies: A national study of civic learning for adolescent students**

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### **Summary**

This study uses the 2010 National Study on the State of Social Studies Teachers to examine social studies instruction designed to engage students in civic-learning. Our research analyzes the frequency of social studies instructional strategies as they are used by elementary, middle, and high school teachers to engage students in developing (a) core democratic values such as diversity, political and social equality, and the common good; (b) civic responsibility which involves participation in voting, service to the community, and social movement activities; and (c) critical thinking and decision-making skills necessary to understand and address political and social problems.

Preliminary statistical analysis suggests that teachers are not practicing the types of instructional strategies that research indicates contributes to improved student civic learning and engagement. This suggests that social studies teachers, who likely are the most prominent advocates for service-learning in schools, are not practicing the types of teaching that is necessary for civic learning and engagement for a variety of reasons. These are important initial findings regarding understanding and creating classroom and school environments that support and utilize service-learning. Implications suggest that more targeted professional development related to these types of instructional strategies and/or that more instructional flexibility is needed.

Understanding more about social studies instruction for middle school students' civic development can

make important contributions to service-learning, civic engagement, and school effectiveness practice, policy, and research. Examination of instruction emphasized by social studies teachers to engage students in civic-learning activities can help us understand ways to promote a classroom environment that embraces the civic mission of education through service-learning as well as the academic mission of strengthening learning. It can also provide new ways to understand what it means to educate middle school students for civic engagement, the role of teachers play in this process, and the ways that teachers are educated and supported to ensure all students' active involvement in a democratic society.

## **References**

There were no references provided with this proposal.